

EXPANSION

Convention center to rise in Provo

City giving Provo Park Hotel a boost to build center and 6-story tower.

By Jim Rayburn
Deseret News staff writer

PROVO — The city will help Provo Park Hotel build the downtown convention center that local corporations have been seeking for several years.

Mayor George Stewart and owners of Provo Park Hotel announced Tuesday that a 28,000-square-foot conference center and

a 96-room, six-story tower will be added to the south side of the existing hotel. The two-story Utah Valley Conference Center will have 10 meeting rooms, a 150-seat tiered lecture room, an executive boardroom and a ballroom.

"Hopefully, this will keep Novell, NuSkin, Ameritech Library Services, R.R. Donnelly and worldwide companies like that from holding their conventions in Salt Lake," Stewart said. "It might even allow Brigham Young University to host a few more events, like the NCAA basketball tourna-

ment."

The expansion project will cost about \$13 million, most of which will be paid by the hotel's owners. Provo Park Hotel is owned by Kahler Corp., with headquarters in Rochester, Minn., and EsNet, a group of local investors. The city will give the hotel about \$1.1 million in property tax breaks over a 20-year period and will help the hotel secure a \$1 million federal grant.

"When it's all said and done, this will be a world-class facility," Kahler President Harold Milner said.

Kahler also owns the Ogden Park Hotel, University Park Hotel, Olympia Park Hotel and Salt Lake Downtown Hilton. Provo Park Hotel was formerly Seven Peaks Hotel and was purchased by Kahler from U.S. Bankruptcy Court in September 1993 after state insurance officials foreclosed on property operated by Victor and Suzanne Borchers.

The city originally planned to use the \$1 million federal grant, approved by Congress in September as part of a community development block grant special projects bill, to help build a

performing arts center north of Provo Park Hotel. That project, however, is on hold because the city has been unable to secure the remaining funds.

"We still plan to build a downtown performing arts center someday, but the city just doesn't have the dollars right now to do it," Stewart said.

If the city failed to designate a use for the federal funds it likely would have lost the \$1 million grant. The city approached Kahler about using the money to help build the convention center, but the deal wasn't sealed until the city agreed to the tax increments to help finance the new hotel tower.

"It doesn't do much good to have the new convention space and not

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FEDERAL FUNDING

2 bumps in Utah's drive for light rail





utive named director r Technology Systems

izes in software productivity tools to assist teachers in curriculum and lesson planning, the use of media in teaching, evaluation of student work and the recording and reporting of student work.

Rasmussen's responsibilities include prospecting, customer account management and sales training.

She earned a bachelor of arts degree in elementary education and a master's degree in public administration, both from the University of Utah.

oints Utahn to board

priorities for the Education Department's Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Members may serve a maximum of two six-year terms. The board will meet quarterly and will select a chair from its appointed members to serve a two-year

MONTOKA

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Fulmer's role in the case changed Tuesday from victim and heroine to accuser. The manager took the witness stand against Montoya in a preliminary hearing at 3rd Circuit Court.

She detailed for a judge how the prison parolee lined up each of the 13 hostages at one point and threatened to shoot them "one by one by one." Montoya, who was asking only for his girlfriend, also talked about killing himself and eventually dictated two suicide notes to Fulmer, she testified.

Montoya, 22, faces his first hearing in district court on April 3. Fourteen of the 16 counts carry possible life prison terms.

Montoya was charged with aggravated assault, a third-degree felony; aggravated robbery, a first-degree felony; possession of a dangerous weapon by a restricted person, a second-degree felony; and 15 counts of aggravated kidnapping, a first-degree felony.

But Judge Philip Palmer agreed to drop three of the kidnapping charges because three Taco Bell employees fled the store and were not held hostage.

However, Johnson said she will seek a plea bargain for her client. "Nothing has been offered or dis-

CONSTRUCTION

2 cities head into next lap of rivalry

Orem official thinks both will benefit from the race for convention business.

By Sharon M. Haddock
Deseret News staff writer

OREM — The race is on. But for Orem and Provo, that's nothing new.

Delance Squire, president of the Commission for Economic Development in Orem, said the competition between the sister cities for convention center business will really be more of the same.

"I don't think it hurts anybody," said Squire. "I think both will benefit. We need both."

Squire said there is enough business to support both facili-

ties, especially with Provo razing six motels to put in a new mall.

Many visitors to Utah County stay in Salt Lake City because they can't find accommodations locally, said Squire. Often, reservations must be made six weeks in advance. "That would change."

Squire said businesses that bring in people for seminars and workshops would be free to do more and such business would build on itself. "We've taken surveys in the past that show us the need is there for more," said Squire. "I think each city will do the best thing for themselves, and I think both will benefit."

John Q. Hammons' multistory 235-room luxury hotel and Orem Convention Center is still a go at the mouth of Provo Canyon.

In fact, Mayor Stella Welsh said an announcement is only about "three weeks out" on that project.

Hammons' office declined to comment, and local partner Dr. Rick Parkinson referred calls to Hammons.

Mayor Welsh said she personally can't make any comment about Provo's plans.

"I don't know anything about it except what I read in the papers," said Welsh. "I'm not concerned about it."

Squire said both facilities will probably be built at about the same time. He disagreed that Orem is in any kind of "stall mode."

"We live in a wild time in history," said Squire.

HOTEL

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have enough rooms for the visitors it will attract," the mayor said.

Construction on the project will begin in about three months and is expected to be complete by early 1997. Stewart said the expansion project likely will bring about \$100,000 in new sales tax revenue into city coffers annually.

The entrance to the convention center and new hotel tower will be from Center Street. The city used about \$1 million in redevelop-

ment funds to purchase four parcels on Center Street to go with two it already owned. The city will either lease or sell the land to the hotel.

Two businesses, Al's Shoe Repair and Peking House Restaurant, will have to relocate. The new conference center will be bordered by the Provo Pharmacy building on the east and Great Basin Fly Fishing Co. on the west.

"This will really be a boon to the businesses now located on Center Street," the mayor said.

Milner said the expansion project will add about 50 jobs to Provo Park Hotel's staff of about 200. Since acquiring the hotel Kahler has spent about \$1 million

on improvements and the new tower will give the hotel 328 rooms. The new rooms will be suite-type rooms with living quarters and a kitchen.

"These will be the kind of rooms that have been attractive to the business traveler," Milner said.

Kahler also announced plans Tuesday to build a Marriott Residence Inn south of Riverside Country Club at about 295 W. 2230 North. The inn will have 114 suites, a fitness center, indoor pool and basketball and tennis facilities. Construction on the new inn, which is expected to employ about 50, also will begin in about three months.